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2012 MARTEN AND FISHER HARVEST SURVEY

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ABSTRACT

A survey was completed to determine the number of harvest tag holders who set traps for marten and fisher, the number of animals caught, the types of traps used, and the number of days spent trapping. In 2012, 2,181 furtakers obtained a harvest tag to trap marten or fisher, compared to 1,710 tag holders in 2011 (28% increase). About 28% of the tag holders set traps specifically for marten (613 trappers) and 29% set traps for fisher (633). These trappers spent about 4,387 days targeting marten, captured 455 marten, and registered 315 marten. Trappers pursuing other species caught an additional 130 marten and registered 7 of these non-target marten. The number of trappers targeting marten and their trapping effort increased significantly between 2011 and 2012 by 36% (613 versus 453 trappers) and 28% (4,387 versus 3,431 days), respectively. Furthermore, the number of marten registered increased significantly by 39% between 2011 and 2012 (322 versus 232). Trapper effort per registered marten was not significantly different between 2012 than 2011 (13.9 versus 15.9 days). An estimated 633 trappers spent 5,107 days targeting fisher, captured 324 fisher, and registered 235 fisher. Trappers pursuing other species caught 208 additional fisher and registered 12 of the non-target fisher. The number of trappers seeking fisher increased significantly by 27% from 2011 and their trapping effort increased significantly by 24%. Although the number of fisher registered by all trappers increased by 21%, the change was not significantly different between 2011 and 2012. Furthermore, trapper effort per registered fisher was not significantly different between 2012 than 2011 (21.8 versus 21.2 days).



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INTRODUCTION

The Natural Resources Commission and Department of Natural Resources (DNR) have the authority and responsibility to protect and manage the wildlife resources of the state of Michigan. Harvest surveys are important management tools used to help accomplish this statutory responsibility. The main objectives of this harvest survey were to determine the number of trappers who set traps for marten (*Martes americana*) and fisher (*M. pennanti*), the types of traps used, the number of days trapped, and the number of animals captured.

Efforts to restore the American marten and fisher have been successful throughout the Upper Peninsula (UP) (Williams et al. 2007). As a result, the first modern fisher trapping season was initiated in 1989, and the first modern marten trapping season was initiated in 2000.

In 2012, the marten and fisher trapping season was December 1-15 in the entire UP, except Drummond Island, Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, and Seney National Wildlife Refuge. In order to trap either marten or fisher, trappers were required to obtain a free harvest tag, in addition to a Fur Harvester License. As in 2011, trappers were limited to one marten or one fisher in 2012. Successful trappers were required to register all fisher and marten taken by December 19, 2012. Regulations mandate any fisher or marten captured in excess of the limit or outside of the season (i.e., incidental captures) be released alive by trappers. If these incidental captures could not be released alive, trappers were required to transfer the incidental catches to the DNR. Trappers could use body-gripping (e.g., conibear) traps and foothold traps to capture marten and fisher. Live traps were also legal if set within 150 yards of a residence or farm building.

METHODS

A questionnaire (Appendix A) was sent to everyone who obtained a marten or fisher trapping permit in 2012 (2,181 permit holders). Trappers receiving the questionnaire were asked to report if they set traps for marten or fisher, number of days spent afield (i.e., effort), number of marten and fisher caught and released alive, and number of marten and fisher registered (registration estimates included incidentally caught animals that were not returned to the trapper). The number of days spent afield was reported as the number of days in which a trapper had at least one trap set. Trappers were asked to report whether any marten and fisher captured were taken in traps set for them or taken in traps set for another species. Trappers were also asked to indicate their impression of the status of the marten and fisher populations in the county where they primarily trapped (i.e., absent, stable, increasing, or decreasing).

Questionnaires were mailed to all permit holders during mid-January 2013, and up to two follow-up questionnaires were mailed to nonrespondents. Although all permit holders were sent a questionnaire, not everybody returned their questionnaire. To extrapolate from the tag holders that returned their questionnaire to all people obtaining harvest tags, estimates were calculated using a simple random sampling design (Cochran 1977).

A 95% confidence limit (CL) was calculated for each estimate. In theory, the CL can be added and subtracted from the estimate to calculate the 95% confidence interval. The confidence interval is a measure of the precision associated with the estimate and implies that the true

value would be within this interval 95 times out of 100. Unfortunately, there are several other possible sources of error in surveys that are probably more serious than theoretical calculations of sampling error. They include failure of participants to provide answers (nonresponse bias), question wording, and question order. Because it is very difficult to measure these biases, estimates were not adjusted for these possible biases.

Statistical tests are used routinely to determine the likelihood that the differences among estimates are larger than expected by chance alone. The overlap of 95% confidence intervals was used to determine whether estimates differed. Non-overlapping 95% confidence intervals was equivalent to stating that the difference between the means was larger than would be expected 995 out of 1,000 times, if the study had been repeated (Payton et al. 2003).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In 2012, 2,181 trappers obtained harvest tags to trap either marten or fisher, compared to 1,710 tag holders in 2011 (28% increase). Men obtained most of the marten and fisher harvest tags (2,054). Women obtained 118 harvest tags, and the sex of nine tag holders was unknown. Of the 2,139 people receiving the questionnaire, 1,226 responded (57% response rate). Questionnaires could not be delivered to 42 harvest tag holders.

Marten

About 28% of the tag holders set traps specifically for marten (613 trappers, Table 1). About $54 \pm 4\%$ of these trappers successfully captured at least one marten. The trappers targeting marten spent 4,387 days trapping ($\bar{x} = 7.2 \pm 0.3$ days/trapper), captured 455 marten (140 released alive), and registered 315 marten (Table 2). Trappers targeting other species caught 130 additional marten. Seven of these non-target marten were registered and 123 were released alive. Among trappers seeking marten, the greatest numbers of marten were captured in Marquette (100), Baraga (82), and Chippewa (52) counties.

The number of trappers targeting marten increased significantly by 35% (613 versus 453 trappers) and their trapping effort increased significantly by 28% (4,387 versus 3,431 days, Figure 1) between 2011 and 2012. The number of marten registered by all trappers (including trappers targeting marten and trappers that caught non-target marten) increased significantly by 39% between 2011 and 2012 (322 versus 232 marten, Figure 1). Among trappers targeting marten, the mean number of days of effort per registered marten was 13.9 ± 1.5 days in 2012, which was not significantly different from the estimate from 2011 (15.9 days, Figure 2).

The mean number of days of effort per registered marten was correlated with the mean value of marten pelts during 2000-2011 (Pearson product moment correlation coefficient [r] = 0.73, probability of obtaining this result [P] = 0.01) (Figure 3). The correlation between trapping effort and pelt prices ($r = 0.66$, $P = 0.01$) was also significant.

Most trappers used body-gripping type traps (e.g., conibears) to capture marten ($78 \pm 3\%$), although foothold traps also were used frequently ($32 \pm 3\%$). Among trappers using body-gripping traps, the mean number of body-gripping traps set per day was 4.6 ± 0.3 . Among trappers using foothold traps, the mean number of foothold traps set per day was 4.5 ± 0.5 .

Thirty-eight percent of marten trappers ($\pm 3\%$) believed marten numbers were increasing in the county where they trapped most often, while $30 \pm 3\%$ thought marten numbers were stable, $7 \pm 2\%$ thought marten were declining, $3 \pm 1\%$ indicated marten were not present, and $23 \pm 3\%$ did not comment on the status of marten.

Fisher

About 29% of the marten and fisher tag holders set traps for fisher (633 trappers, Table 1). About $40 \pm 3\%$ of these trappers successfully captured at least one fisher. Trappers targeting fishers spent 5,107 days trapping (8.1 ± 0.4 days/trapper), captured 324 fisher (89 released alive), and registered 235 fisher (Table 3). Trappers targeting other species caught 208 additional fisher (180 released alive) and registered 12 incidental catches. Among trappers seeking fisher, the greatest numbers of fisher were captured in Ontonagon (55), Marquette (37), and Baraga (36) counties.

Between 2011 and 2012, the number of trappers targeting fisher increased significantly by 27% (633 versus 500 trappers in 2011) and their trapping effort increased significantly by 24% (5,107 versus 4,109 days, Figure 4). The number of fisher registered by all trappers (including trappers targeting fisher and trappers that caught non-target fisher) increased by 21% between 2011 and 2012; however, this change was not significantly different (247 versus 203 fisher, Figure 4). Among trappers targeting fisher, the mean number of days of effort per registered fisher was 21.8 ± 2.2 days in 2012, which was similar to the estimate for 2011 (21.2 days, Figure 5).

The mean number of days of effort per registered fisher was not significantly correlated with the mean value of fisher pelts during 1997-2010 ($r = 0.46$, $P = 0.07$; Figure 6). In contrast, the correlations between the number of trappers and pelt prices ($r = 0.65$, $P = 0.01$) and between trapping effort and pelt prices ($r = 0.63$, $P = 0.01$) were significant.

Most trappers used body-gripping traps (e.g., conibears) to capture fisher ($72 \pm 3\%$), although foothold traps also were used frequently ($40 \pm 3\%$). Among trappers using body-gripping traps, the mean number of body-gripping traps set per day was 4.7 ± 0.3 traps. Among trappers using foothold traps, the mean number of foothold traps set daily was 4.8 ± 0.4 traps.

Twenty-six percent of fisher trappers ($\pm 3\%$) believed fisher numbers were increasing in the county where they trapped most often, while $40 \pm 3\%$ thought fisher numbers were stable, $9 \pm 2\%$ thought they were declining, $2 \pm 1\%$ indicated fisher were absent, and $23 \pm 3\%$ did not comment on the status of fisher.

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Table 1. Estimated harvest tag holders that attempted to trap marten or fisher in Michigan during 2012 season.

Species sought by tag holders	%	95% CL ^a	Total	95% CL ^a
Trapped only marten	10	1	226	25
Trapped only fisher	11	1	245	26
Trapped both marten and fisher	18	1	387	31
Trapped either marten or fisher	39	2	859	39
Trapped marten ^b	28	2	613	36
Trapped fisher ^c	29	2	633	37

^a95% confidence limits.

^bSum of trappers that trapped only marten and trappers that trapped both marten and fisher.

^cSum of trappers that trapped only fisher and trappers that trapped both marten and fisher.

Table 2. Estimated number of trappers, trapping effort, marten captured (including all incidental catches and releases), marten released alive, and marten registered (including incidental catches) during the 2012 Michigan trapping season.

Type of trapper and area trapped	Trappers		Trapping effort (days)		Marten captured ^a		Marten released alive		Marten registered ^b	
	Total	95% CL	Total	95% CL	Total	95% CL	Total	95% CL	Total	95% CL
Trappers that set traps targeting marten										
Alger	57	13	348	93	46	13	7	6	39	11
Baraga	59	13	293	74	82	28	43	23	39	11
Chippewa	92	16	542	115	52	14	7	6	44	11
Delta	9	5	82	50	2	2	0	0	2	2
Dickinson	23	8	252	99	2	2	0	0	2	2
Gogebic	23	8	201	83	14	9	4	5	11	6
Houghton	41	11	347	106	25	9	2	2	23	8
Iron	41	11	268	82	18	7	0	0	18	7
Keweenaw	2	2	18	23	2	2	2	2	0	0
Luce	55	13	345	95	36	16	11	10	25	10
Mackinac	23	8	169	72	18	8	4	3	14	6
Marquette	108	18	709	140	100	27	39	21	60	13
Menominee	11	6	132	71	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ontonagon	44	11	279	82	25	11	7	6	18	7
Schoolcraft	46	12	375	107	36	19	16	14	20	8
Unknown	2	2	27	35	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal ^d	613	36	4,387	334	455	52	140	37	315	29
Trappers that captured marten in traps set to catch another species										
Alger	2	2	NA	NA	4	5	4	5	0	0
Baraga	7	5	NA	NA	14	10	11	10	4	3
Chippewa	2	2	NA	NA	2	2	2	2	0	0
Delta	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dickinson	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gogebic	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Houghton	5	5	NA	NA	5	5	4	3	2	2
Iron	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Keweenaw	2	2	NA	NA	2	2	2	2	0	0
Luce	9	5	NA	NA	12	8	11	8	2	2
Mackinac	2	2	NA	NA	2	2	2	2	0	0
Marquette	12	6	NA	NA	68	44	68	44	0	0
Menominee	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ontonagon	5	4	NA	NA	12	9	12	9	0	0
Schoolcraft	4	3	NA	NA	7	7	7	7	0	0
Unknown	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
LP ^c	2	2	NA	NA	2	2	2	2	0	0
Subtotal ^d	55	13	NA	NA	130	48	123	48	7	5
Grand total ^d	642	37	4,387	334	585	77	263	67	322	30

^aAll marten removed from traps, including all incidental catches and releases.

^bIncludes incidentally caught marten that were not returned to the trapper.

^cCounties in the Lower Peninsula.

^dNumber of trappers does not add up to totals because trappers could trap in more than one county. Column totals for trapping effort and capture may not equal statewide totals because of rounding errors.

Table 3. Estimated number of trappers, trapping effort, fisher captured (including all incidental catches and releases), fisher released alive, and fisher registered (including incidental catches) by trappers during the 2012 Michigan trapping season.

Type of trapper and county trapped	Trappers		Trapping effort (days)		Fisher captured ^a		Fisher released alive		Fisher registered ^b	
	95%		95%		95%		95%		95%	
	Total	CL ^c	Total	CL ^c	Total	CL ^c	Total	CL ^c	Total	CL ^c
Trappers that set traps targeting fisher										
Alger	46	12	316	92	16	8	4	5	12	6
Baraga	36	10	219	73	36	20	21	17	14	6
Chippewa	66	14	448	110	9	5	0	0	9	5
Delta	5	4	57	45	2	2	0	0	2	2
Dickinson	46	12	459	130	16	7	0	0	16	7
Gogebic	41	11	402	118	21	10	9	8	12	6
Houghton	37	10	276	92	18	8	4	3	14	6
Iron	52	12	393	105	20	9	5	7	14	6
Keweenaw	9	5	64	41	20	19	14	16	5	4
Luce	48	12	295	88	18	8	4	3	14	6
Mackinac	20	8	167	77	11	9	7	7	4	3
Marquette	69	14	549	131	37	12	5	5	32	10
Menominee	50	12	521	136	23	9	2	2	21	8
Ontonagon	69	14	540	130	55	19	12	12	43	11
Schoolcraft	50	12	375	103	23	9	2	2	21	8
Unknown	2	2	27	35	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal ^d	633	37	5,107	378	324	43	89	31	235	25
Trappers that captured fisher in traps set to catch another species										
Alger	4	3	NA	NA	14	15	14	15	0	0
Baraga	4	3	NA	NA	9	9	9	9	0	0
Chippewa	4	3	NA	NA	4	3	4	3	0	0
Delta	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dickinson	2	2	NA	NA	2	2	0	0	2	2
Gogebic	4	3	NA	NA	12	14	12	14	0	0
Houghton	7	5	NA	NA	21	21	5	4	0	0
Iron	2	2	NA	NA	2	2	2	2	0	0
Keweenaw	5	4	NA	NA	20	15	20	15	0	0
Luce	7	5	NA	NA	11	8	9	8	2	2
Mackinac	9	6	NA	NA	11	8	9	6	2	2
Marquette	28	11	NA	NA	62	26	55	24	7	5
Menominee	4	3	NA	NA	7	7	7	7	0	0
Ontonagon	4	3	NA	NA	12	12	12	12	0	0
Schoolcraft	12	6	NA	NA	21	11	21	11	0	0
Unknown	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal ^d	75	15	NA	NA	208	58	180	48	12	6
Grand total ^d	667	37	5,107	378	531	78	268	62	247	26

^aAll fisher removed from traps, including all incidental catches and releases.

^bIncludes incidentally caught fisher that were not returned to the trapper.

^c95% confidence limits.

^dNumber of trappers does not add up to statewide total because trappers could trap in more than one county. Column totals for trapping effort and capture may not equal statewide totals because of rounding errors.

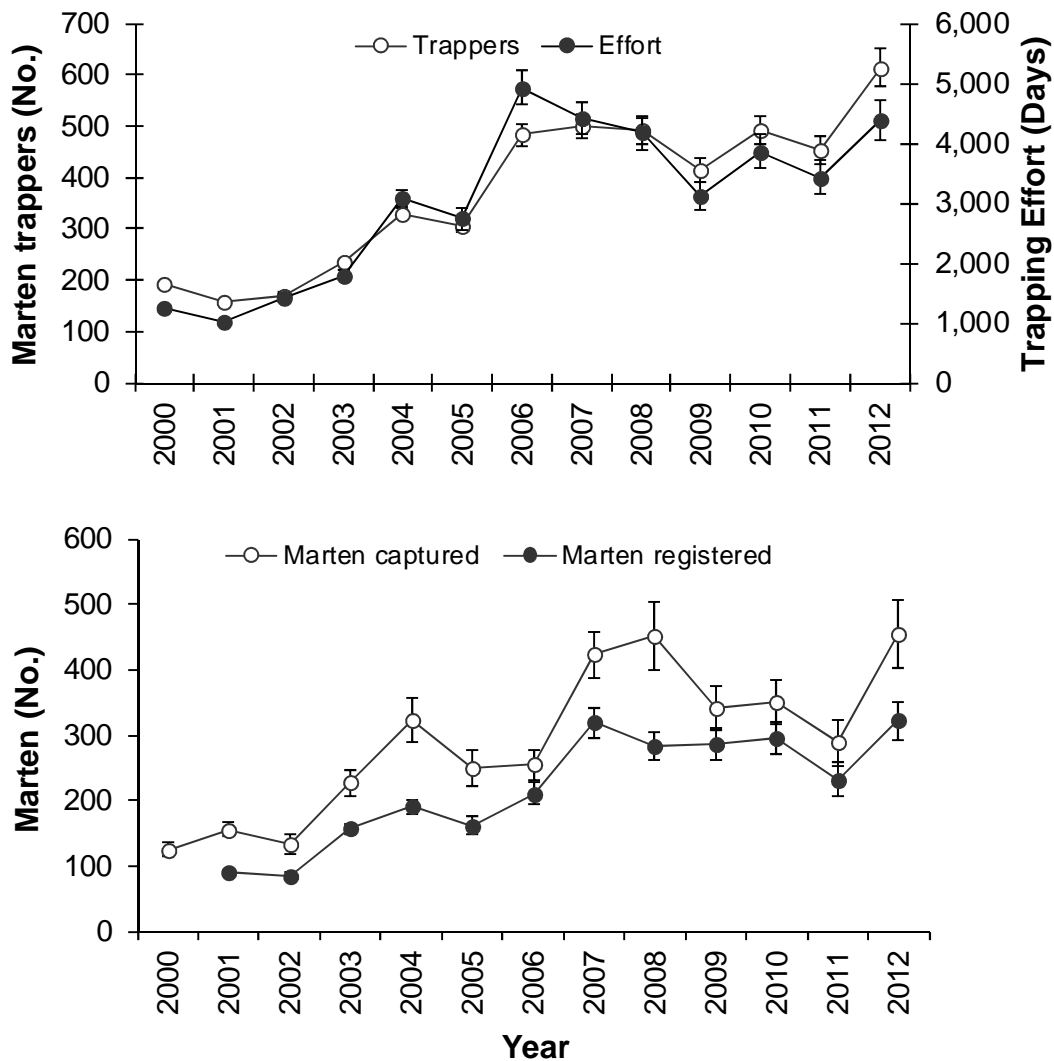


Figure 1. Estimated number of trappers, trapping effort (days), and number of marten captured and registered in Michigan, 2000-2012. Registration total was not estimated in 2000. Beginning in 2006, the estimates of marten captured and registered included incidental animals that the trapper was not allowed to keep; estimates from previous years excluded incidental animals. Estimates of trappers and effort included only trappers specifically targeting martens, but estimates of marten captured and registered included the take by all trappers (i.e., included marten taken by trappers not targeting marten).

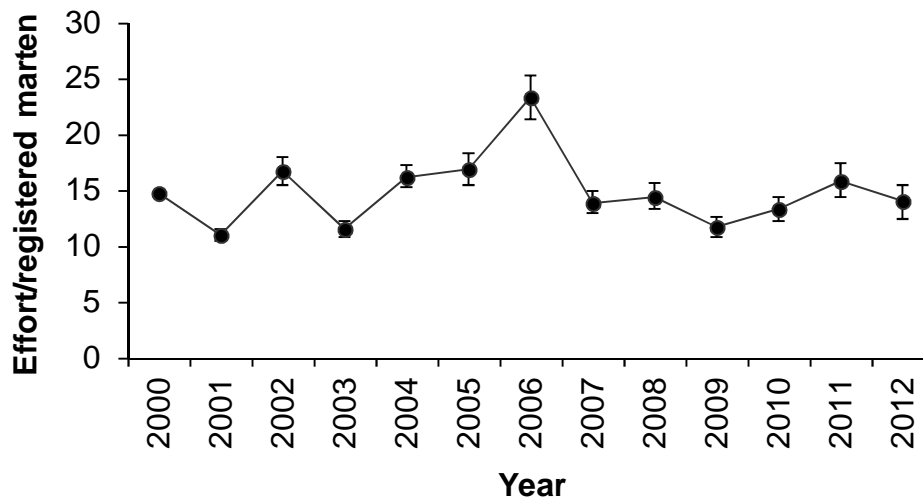


Figure 2. Estimated mean number of days required to harvest a marten in Michigan during 2000-2012. Vertical bars represent the 95% confidence interval. Estimates of effort/registered fisher included only trappers targeting fishers.

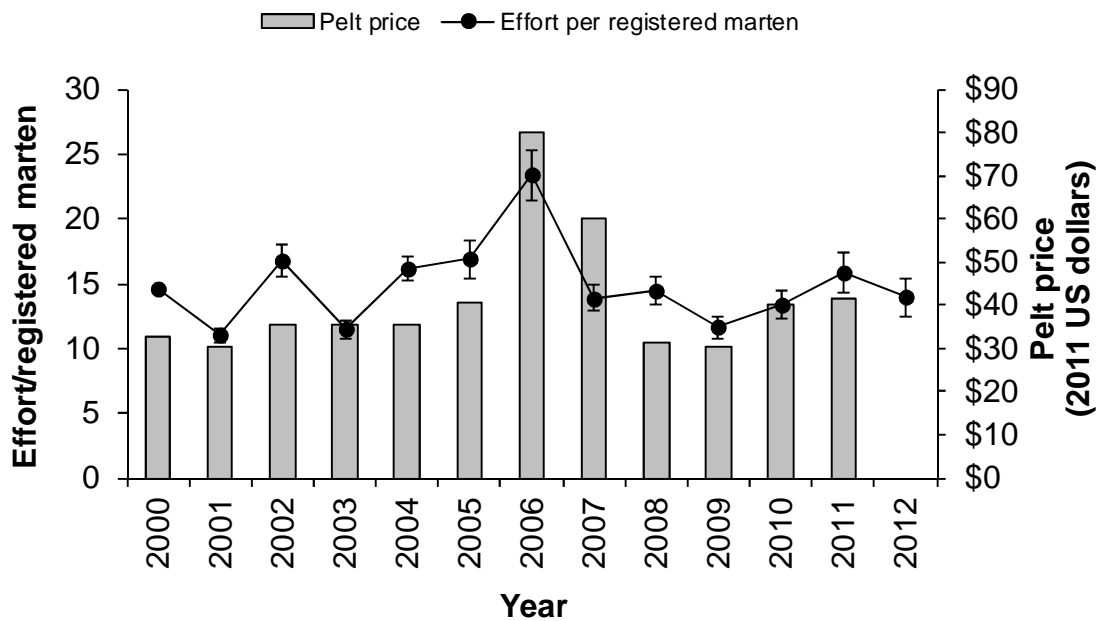


Figure 3. Estimated mean number of days required to harvest a marten in Michigan and the mean pelt value during 2000-2011. Vertical bars represent the 95% confidence interval. Pelt prices were the mean of values reported from Minnesota (Abraham and Dexter 2011). Pelt price were adjusted for inflation and reported in 2012 dollars. Estimates of effort/registered marten included only trappers targeting marten.

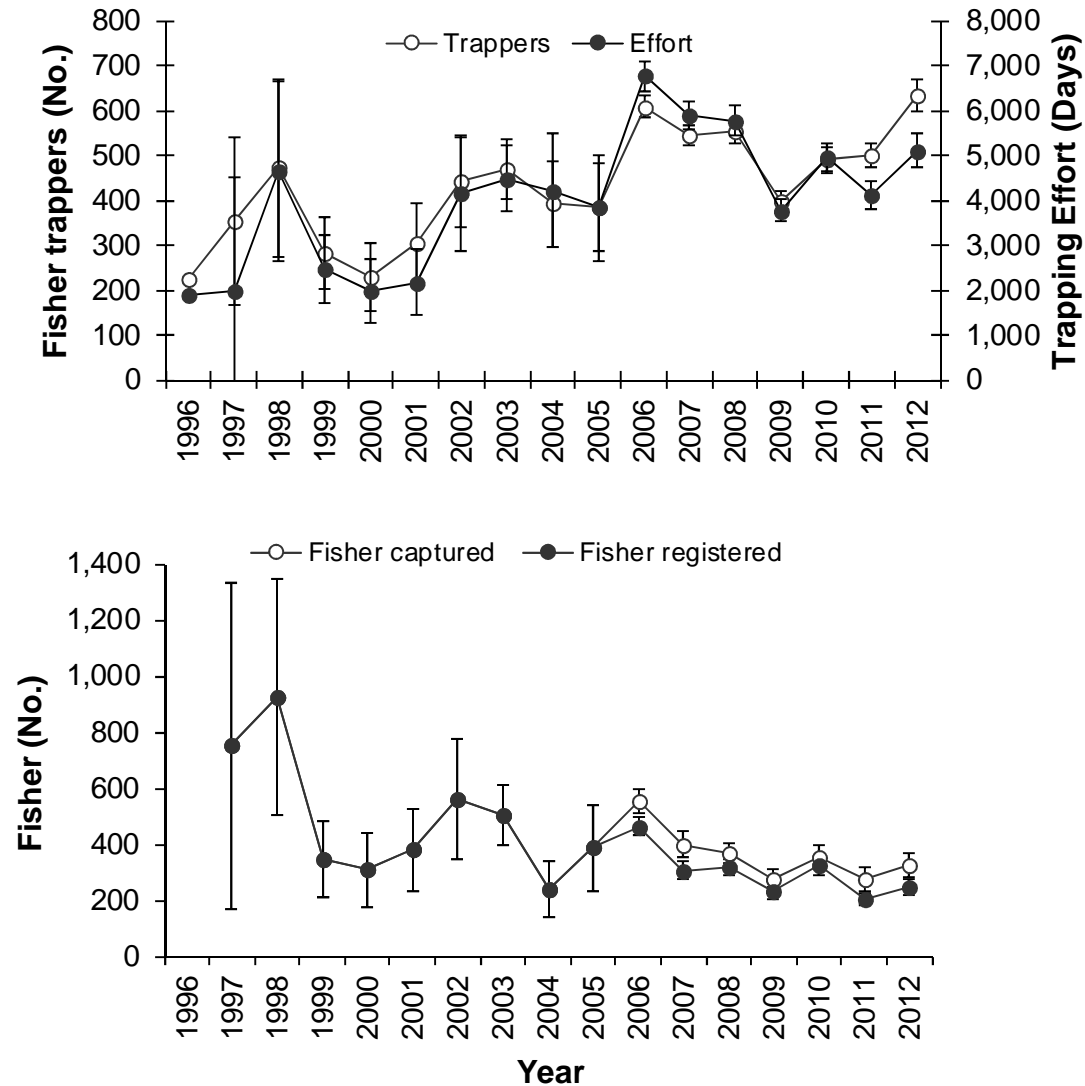


Figure 4. Estimated number of trappers, trapping effort (days), and number of fisher captured and registered in Michigan, 1996-2012. Estimates of trappers and effort included only trappers targeting fishers, but estimates of fisher captured and registered included the take by all trappers (i.e., included fisher taken by trappers not targeting fisher).

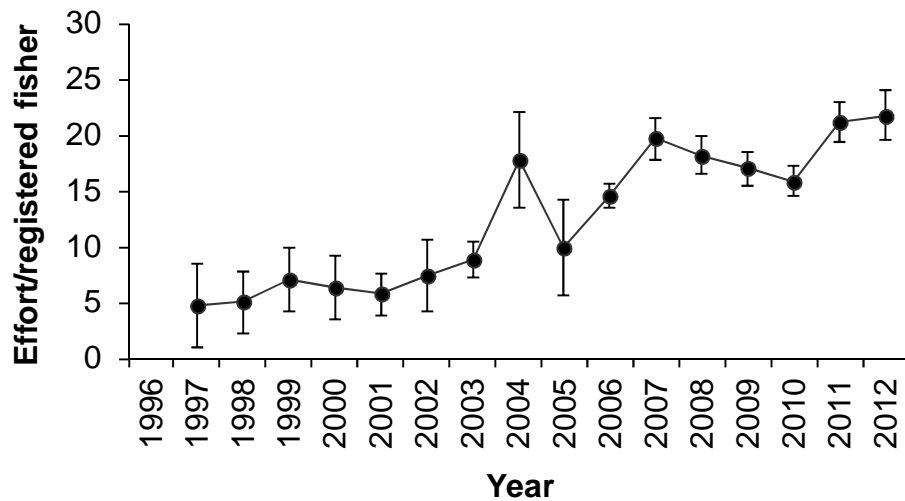


Figure 5. Estimated mean number of days required to harvest a fisher in Michigan during 1997-2012. Vertical bars represent the 95% confidence interval. Estimates of effort/registered fisher included only trappers targeting fishers.

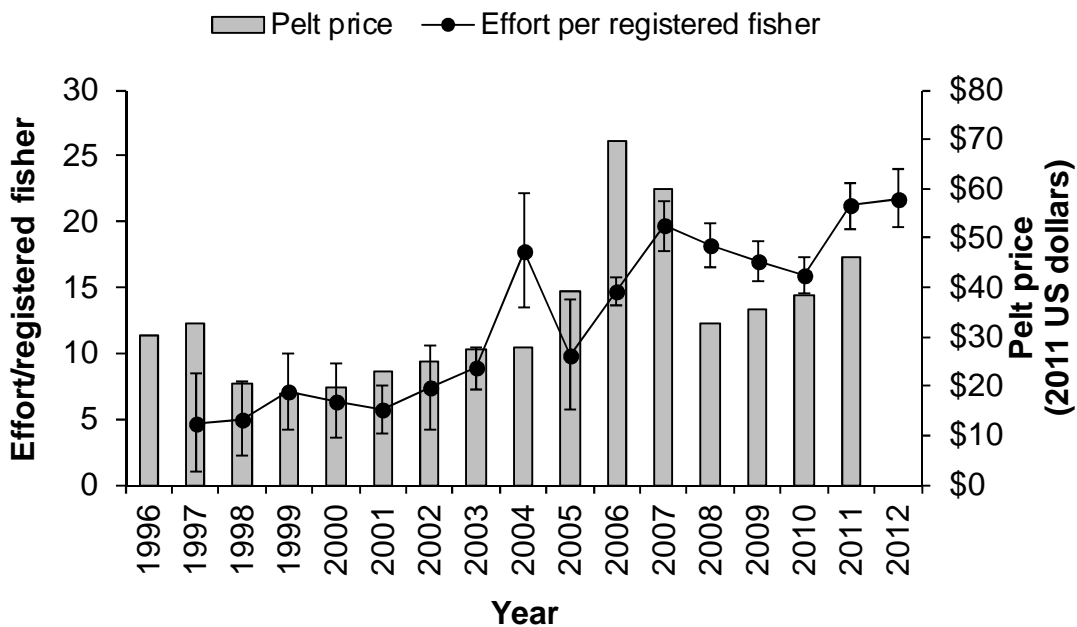


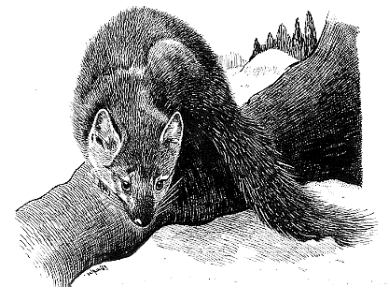
Figure 6. Estimated mean number of days required to harvest a fisher in Michigan and the mean pelt value during 1996-2011. Vertical bars represent the 95% confidence interval. Pelt prices were the mean of values reported from Minnesota (Abraham and Dexter 2011) and Wisconsin (Dhuey 2011). Pelt price were adjusted for inflation and reported in 2012 dollars. Estimates of effort/registered fisher included only trappers targeting fishers.

Appendix A. The questionnaire sent to people who obtained a marten or fisher trapping permit in 2012.



2012 MARTEN AND FISHER HARVEST REPORT

This information is requested under authority of Part 435, 1994 PA 451, M.C.L. 324.43539.



It is important that you complete and return this questionnaire even if you did not trap or capture a marten or fisher.

1. Did you place traps for marten during the 2012 season (December 1-15)?

¹ ☐ Yes ² ☐ No, Skip to question number 5.

2. If you trapped during the 2012 marten season, please complete the following table.

COUNTY TRAPPED FOR MARTEN (List each county that you trapped for marten.)	NUMBER OF DAYS TRAPPED FOR MARTEN	NUMBER OF MARTEN CAUGHT AND RELEASED (Count only martens you released alive from your traps.)	NUMBER OF MARTEN CAUGHT AND REGISTERED (Count all marten that were registered including incidental catches that were not returned to you.)

3. How many of the following traps did you set for marten in 2012?

(For each type, record the average number used per day.)

_____ Foothold
_____ Conibear
_____ Other (Please specify_____)

4. What is the status of marten in the area (county) you trapped most often in 2012?

¹ ☐ Increasing ² ☐ Decreasing ³ ☐ Stable ⁴ ☐ Not present ⁵ ☐ Not sure

5. Did you incidentally catch any marten while trapping for other species that you have not already reported in Question #2.

¹ ☐ Yes ² ☐ No, Skip to question number 7.

6. If you answered yes in the previous question, please report the location and number of incidental martens you captured. Please do not report marten already reported in question #2.

COUNTY WHERE INCIDENTAL MARTEN CAUGHT (List each county that you caught an incidental marten.)	NUMBER OF INCIDENTAL MARTEN CAUGHT AND RELEASED (Count only incidental martens you released alive from your traps.)	NUMBER OF INCIDENTAL MARTEN CAUGHT AND REGISTERED (Count incidental marten that were registered including catches that were not returned to you.)

7. Did you place traps for fisher during the 2012 season (December 1-15)?

¹ ☐ Yes ² ☐ No, skip to question #11.

8. If you trapped during the 2012 fisher season, please complete the following table.

COUNTY TRAPPED FOR FISHER (List each county that you trapped for fisher.)	NUMBER OF DAYS TRAPPED FOR FISHER	NUMBER OF FISHER CAUGHT AND RELEASED (Count only fishers you released alive from your traps.)	NUMBER OF FISHER CAUGHT AND REGISTERED (Count all fisher that were registered including incidental catches that were not returned to you.)

9. How many of the following traps did you set for fisher in 2012?

(For each type, record the average number used per day.)

_____ Foothold
_____ Conibear
_____ Other (Please specify _____)

10. What is the status of fisher in the area (county) you trapped most often in 2012?

¹ ☐ Increasing ² ☐ Decreasing ³ ☐ Stable ⁴ ☐ Not present ⁵ ☐ Not sure

11. Did you incidentally catch any fisher while trapping for other species that you have not already reported in Question #8.

¹ ☐ Yes ² ☐ No, Skip to question number 13.

12. If you answered yes in the previous question, please report the location and number of incidental fisher you captured. Please do not report fisher already reported in question #8.

COUNTY WHERE INCIDENTAL FISHER CAUGHT (List each county that you caught an incidental fisher.)	NUMBER OF INCIDENTAL FISHER CAUGHT AND RELEASED (Count only incidental fisher you released alive from your traps.)	NUMBER OF INCIDENTAL FISHER CAUGHT AND REGISTERED (Count incidental fisher that were registered including catches that were not returned to you.)

13. Do you have any comments or suggestions about marten or fisher management in Michigan?

Please return questionnaire in the enclosed postage-paid envelope.
Thank you for your help!

www.michigan.gov/dnr